

In the Claims:

1. (Cancelled)
2. (Previously presented): The pad assembly of claim 6 wherein the elongated plate member comprises a contoured support attached to the second surface.
3. (Previously presented): The pad assembly of claim 6 wherein the front surface comprises a contoured portion that provides a compressed shape of the compressible layer that approximately corresponds with an anticipated shape of the portion of the user's body.
4. (Previously presented): The pad assembly of claim 6 wherein the front surface comprises a contoured portion having a radius of curvature within the range from approximately 1.5 inches to approximately 7.0 inches.
5. (Previously presented): The pad assembly of claim 6 wherein the first surface comprises a concave portion adapted to engage a portion of the user's body.
6. (Presently Amended): A pad assembly for an exercise machine, comprising:
 - a compressible layer having an uncompressed, non-uniform thickness and having a first surface adapted to engage a portion of a user's body and a second surface opposite from the first surface; and
 - an elongated plate member of approximately uniform thickness having front and back surfaces, the front surface being engaged with the second surface of the compressible layer, and wherein the front surface of the elongated plate member is shaped to provide an approximately uniform-thickness compressed portion of the compressible layer when a compression force is applied to the first surface during an exercise.

7. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 6 wherein the approximately uniform-thickness portion is co-extensive with a portion of the first surface adapted to engage the portion of the user's body.

8. (Previously presented): The pad assembly of claim 6 wherein the front surface of the elongated plate member is shaped to provide an approximately uniform-pressure portion when a compression force is applied to the first surface during an exercise.

9. (Previously presented): The pad assembly of claim 6, further comprising a coupling assembly coupled to the back surface of the elongated plate member and being adapted to attach to an exercise machine.

10-11 (Cancelled):

12. (Presently Amended): A pad assembly for an exercise machine, comprising:

a backing plate of approximately uniform thickness having front and back surfaces and being elongated in a first direction along a first axis, the backing plate being contoured such that the first axis forms a curve; and

a compressible member having an uncompressed, non-uniform thickness and having a first surface adapted to engage a portion of a user's body and a second surface opposite from the first surface, the second surface being coupled to the front surface of the backing plate such that a compression force applied to the first surface provides an approximately uniform-thickness compressed portion of the compressible member between the first surface and the backing plate

13. (Previously presented): The pad assembly of claim 12 wherein the second surface of the compressible member comprises a depressed portion adapted to fittingly engage at least a portion of the backing plate.

14. (Previously presented): The pad assembly of claim 12 wherein the backing plate comprises a contoured pad support projecting from a moveable portion of the exercise machine.

15. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 12 wherein the approximately uniform-thickness portion is co-extensive with a portion of the first surface adapted to contact the portion of the user's body.

16. (Previously presented): The pad assembly of claim 12 wherein the backing plate comprises a contoured portion having a radius of curvature within the range from approximately 1.5 inches to approximately 7.0 inches.

17. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 12 wherein the compressible member comprises a polyurethane member.

18. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 12 wherein, when the compressible force is applied, the compressible member provides a first surface approximately corresponds with an anticipated shape of the portion of the user's body.

19. (Presently Amended): A pad assembly for an exercise machine, comprising:
a layer of compressible padding having an uncompressed, non-uniform thickness and
having a first surface adapted to engage a portion of a user's body and a second surface opposite from the first surface; and

a backing structure attached to the layer of compressible padding and having an approximately uniform-thickness, the backing structure including a backing surface proximate the second surface and being shaped to provide an approximately uniform-thickness compressed portion of the layer of compressible padding when a compression force is applied to the first surface.

20. (Previously presented): The pad assembly of claim 19 wherein the backing structure is contoured such that the compression force is approximately uniformly distributed over the first surface.

21. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 19 wherein the approximately uniform-thickness portion is co-extensive with the first surface.

22. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 19 wherein the backing surface comprises a contoured portion having a radius of curvature within the range from approximately 1.5 inches to approximately 7.0 inches.

23. (Original): The pad assembly of claim 19 wherein the backing structure comprises a channel attached to the backing structure opposite from the layer of compressible padding and adapted to attach to a support portion of an exercise machine.

24 – 35 (Cancelled)

36. (Presently Amended): A method of exercising, comprising:
providing a compressible layer having an uncompressed, non-uniform thickness and having a first surface, and a backing structure having an approximately uniform thickness and including a non-planar backing surface engaged against the compressible layer opposite the first surface; and

pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to compress the compressible layer between the portion of the user's body and the non-planar backing surface and to form an approximately uniform-thickness portion of the compressible layer therebetween.

37. (Original): The method of claim 36 wherein pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to compress the compressible layer comprises pressing a portion of a

user's body against the first surface to form an approximately uniform-thickness portion of the compressible layer that is co-extensive with the portion of the user's body.

38. (Original): The method of claim 36 wherein pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to compress the compressible layer comprises pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to form an approximately uniform-pressure distribution on the portion of the user's body.

39. (Original): The method of claim 36 wherein pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to compress the compressible layer comprises pressing a portion of a user's leg against the first surface.

40. (Original): The method of claim 36 wherein pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to compress the compressible layer comprises pressing a portion of a user's arm against the first surface.

41. (Original): The method of claim 36 wherein pressing a portion of a user's body against the first surface to compress the compressible layer comprises pressing a portion of a user's shoulder against the first surface.